

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
Original Works Publishing

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this play is subject to royalty. It is fully protected by Original Works Publishing, and the copyright laws of the United States. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

The performance rights to this play are controlled by Original Works Publishing and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Royalties are payable with negotiation from Original Works Publishing.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured from Original Works Publishing through direct contact.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

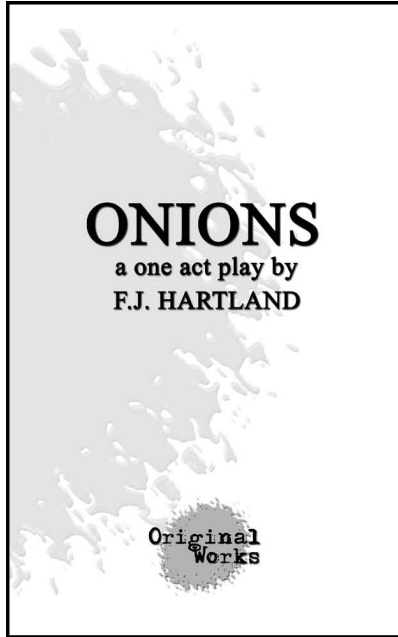
Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play:

**“Produced by special arrangement with
Original Works Publishing.
www.originalworksonline.com”**

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

Smoke and Fire
© 2012, F.J. Hartland
Trade Edition, 2013
ISBN 978-1-63092-016-6

*Also Available By
F.J. Hartland*



Synopsis: Aaron has some important news to tell his mother, but when he gets to the nursing home, will he be able to make her understand?

Cast Size: 1 Male, 2 Females

SMOKE AND FIRE

by F. J. Hartland

“Courage is fire, and bullying is smoke.”
--Benjamin Disraeli

Smoke and Fire had its debut performance in the Pittsburgh New Works Festival 2012. The play was produced by Thoreau NM, A Production Company and directed by lance-eric skapura with the following cast.

Mr. Concannon.....David Santiago
Amber.....Chelsea Forbes
Roy.....Tom Kolos
Mrs. Fleegle.....Barbara Sawatis
Hillary.....Jeremy Enz-Doerschner
Mrs. Miller.....Catherine Kolos

Stage Managers.....Chelsea Kirsch
Ellen Ulmer
Producer.....Wendy L. Rea

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

MR. CONCANNON, the science teacher

AMBER, a high school student

ROY, a high school student

MRS. FLEEGLE, the harried school guidance counselor

HILLARY, a high school boy

MRS. MILLER, his over-worked mother

Each of the actors stands separated from the others by space and/or lighting. Sometimes they speak directly to the audience, sometimes to each other. It should move seamlessly through time and space.

SMOKE AND FIRE

MR. CONCANNON

Science is...beautiful. Science brings order to the chaos of everyday life. I became a teacher so I could share this beauty with young, open minds.

AMBER

What do you mean, "What is X?" How should I know what X is?

ROY

Here a riddle for you....how do you fit four fag-gots on a bar stool?

AMBER

I don't need algebra. I'm pretty.

ROY

Turn it upside down. Get it? Turn the barstool upside down.

MRS. FLEEGLE

Who did you say you were looking for?

MR. CONCANNON

So it wasn't exactly the *GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS* scenario I had imagined. But it was nice high school in a small town.

MRS. FLEEGLE

(With a stack of manila file folders)
Miller? Oh, that's right.

MR. CONCANNON

Sure, there were problems... but not like you see at so many of the bigger schools.

HILLARY

Something like this doesn't happen overnight. It actually began the day I was born....actually before I was born.

MRS. MILLER

He's going to blame me for this. Everyone's going to blame me. But for the record, I am not responsible.

HILLARY

I wasn't really wanted.

MRS. FLEEGLE

I know that file is here somewhere.

MRS. MILLER

My son will tell you he wasn't wanted. But that's not true. I wanted him very much. Yes, my marriage was in trouble, and I thought having a baby would help...

HILLARY

My dad left us before I was born.

MRS. MILLER

Okay, so I was wrong.

MR. CONCANNON

I started teaching here even before that boy was a twinkle in his father's eye.

MRS. MILLER

So if you want to blame someone for all this, blame that worthless son-of-a-bitch his father.

HILLARY

I was doomed from the start. My mother named me Hillary.

AMBER

(To ROY)

His name is Hillary?

ROY

That's a girl's name!

(They laugh)

HILLARY

What was my mother thinking?

MRS. MILLER

It's a perfectly fine name. It was my grandfather's name. It's English.

MRS. FLEEGLE

Let's look through these files again, shall we? McDonald...Mangus...Manheim...

HILLARY

Needless-to-say, school was a living hell for me.

MRS. FLEEGLE

Marcus...Maxwell...Meachum...oh, here it is...
Miller.

AMBER

(Like a child)

He's got a girl's name!

ROY

(Like a child)

Bet he's got girl cooties, too!

(They laugh again)

MRS. FLEEGLE

(Looking at the file)

Yes, yes...all the classic signs. Reading prob-
lems....truancy...suspensions...

MR. CONCANNON

I didn't even know Hillary Miller.

MRS. FLEEGLE

Oh, you want Hillary Miller? This is Eddie
Miller's file. But I thought you were looking for a
boy.

HILLARY

I am a boy!

MRS. FLEEGLE

I am sorry. But there are 400 students in this
school. And just one me. You do the math.

AMBER

(As a teen)

A cosign. I don't know, what's a cosign?

ROY

(As a teen)

Ain't that what your dad did so you could get your car loan?

AMBER

Oh...yeah...

HILLARY

And it didn't help that I was smaller than most of the other kids.

(ROY and AMBER push HILLARY around. They are children.)

AMBER

Pip squeak.

ROY

Shrimp.

AMBER

Squirt.

ROY

Runt.

(ROY shoves HILLARY to the ground.)

HILLARY

It was their daily refrain. When I would cry to my mother she would tell me...

MRS. MILLER

Sticks and stones may break your bones...but names will never harm you.

HILLARY

Mother lied. The names hurt. The sticks and stones would come later.

MRS. FLEEGLE

According to our files, Hillary had anti-social tendencies from the beginning.

HILLARY

The only one who was picked on worse was Randy. He has sort of a club foot. You can imagine the names he was called...

AMBER

(As a child)
Hop-along.

ROY

(As a child)
Gimp.

HILLARY

Recess was always the worst. Inevitably, Randy and I were the last to be chosen for any team sport.

AMBER

We don't want the midget.

ROY

Listen, if you take the midget, we'll take the gimp....

HILLARY

And there were other embarrassing moments...

ROY

(Grabbing HILLARY by the shirt)

I'm make you a deal, kid. Give me your lunch money and I won't break your face.

(HILLARY hands the money over to ROY)

MRS. MILLER

I was worried about Hillary. He seemed to lose so much weight after he started school.

HILLARY

This is terrible to admit, but there were days I hoped they'd pick on Randy instead of me. Eventually, Randy's parents transferred him to the parochial school. I asked my mother to do the same.

MRS. MILLER

I can't afford that! Besides, Hillary, we aren't even Catholic!

HILLARY

With Randy gone...and since I wasn't getting much positive attention at home...or from my

peers...I turned to the only people I had left. My teachers. I became the model student.

(HILLARY steps forward. ROY and AMBER stand on either side of him. They are like children again.)

AMBER

Nerd.

HILLARY

The capitol of South Dakota is Pierre.

ROY

Geek.

HILLARY

Twelve times thirteen is 156.

AMBER

Teacher's pet.

MRS. FLEEGLE

Mrs. Miller, we'd like to test Hillary for the gifted program.

MRS. MILLER

That isn't going to cost anything, is it?

MRS. FLEEGLE

Why no.

HILLARY

Thomas Jefferson served as President from 1800 to 1808.

ROY

Brown nose.

MRS. MILLER

He gets it from my side of the family, you know.

HILLARY

The spectrum of light runs red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

AMBER

Brainiac.

HILLARY

An element can appear in three forms...as a gas, a solid, or a liquid.

ROY

Boot licker.

HILLARY

And when I would tell my mother what they called me, she said...

MRS. MILLER

Ignore them, they're just jealous.

HILLARY

So I tried that.

ROY

Hey, ass kisser....

MRS. FLEEGLE

At first, Hillary's grades were outstanding....

AMBER

Nerd-breath, he's talking to you....

MRS. MILLER

Hillary was such a good student...in the beginning.

ROY

What the matter, geek boy? You deaf or something'?

MR. CONCANNON

And the real beauty is that—in a flash—the answer, the order, will appear to the scientific mind.

ROY

Okay, boy genius, I'll make you listen.

HILLARY

And I soon discovered that it was much harder to ignore fists.

(ROY punches HILLARY. ROY and AMBER laugh.)

MR. CONCANNON

Look at Archimedes, the Greek mathematician. He goes to relax in a deep tub of hot water...

HILLARY

The answer suddenly seemed simple. They hated me because I was smart.

MR. CONCANNON

And as he did, water—displaced by his body—splashed over the sides of the tub. “Eureka!” Archimedes exclaimed.

HILLARY

So I won’t be smart any more.

MR. CONCANNON

I have found it!

MRS. FLEEGLE

But by the fourth grade, his marks declined rapidly.

MRS. MILLER

If you don’t pull up your grades, they’re going to kick you out of the gifted program. How will I face the neighbors?

MRS. FLEEGLE

We had no choice to remove Hillary from the gifted class.

HILLARY

But not being smart didn’t help. I was still their punching bag.

ROY

Wussy.

AMBER

Sissy.

ROY

Pussy.

HILLARY

When my mother questioned me about the bruises, I'd tell her I fell on the playground.

MRS. MILLER

Why do you have to be so clumsy? Start looking where you're going.

MRS. FLEEGLE

There are a number of notations from the school nurse here. It seems Hillary was very accident-prone.

(To MRS. MILLER)

You really should have him tested.

MRS. MILLER

Is that going to cost anything?

HILLARY

As if things weren't bad enough, the dentist told my mother I needed braces.

MRS. MILLER

Now just how I am supposed to afford that?

HILLARY

But she found a way. It only gave my classmates more ammunition to use against me.

AMBER

Tin grin.

ROY

Metal mouth.

AMBER

Railroad tracks.

ROY

Tinsel teeth.

AMBER

Brace face.

HILLARY

Weekends were my only salvation. And on Sunday nights, I would get down on my knees and pray. I would ask God not to let Monday morning come. But Monday morning always came.

MRS. MILLER

I took Hillary to church every Sunday.

HILLARY

Week after week, month after month, I prayed. But God always let me down. Eventually, I became the only ten-year-old atheist in America.

MRS. MILLER

And then one day—right out of the blue—he refused to go. How do you like that?

MR. CONCANNON

And James Watt was just sitting by the fire, making a cup of tea. The boiling water forced the lid off the kettle. And like that! The idea for the steam engine was born.

HILLARY

Summers weren't bad--until my classmates were old enough to venture into other neighborhoods. Walking to the library or the store became as terrible as going to school because I would inevitably end up running into one...or a gang of them.

(With his library book, HILLARY begins to cross the stage. ROY blocks his way.)

ROY

(Taking HILLARY'S book)

What you got there, pussy-boy?

(ROY and AMBER toss the book over HILLARY's head.)

AMBER

It looks like a library book.

HILLARY

Give me my book.

ROY

Try and get it, sissy.

AMBER

Are you a 'fraidy cat?

(Laughing ROY and AMBER run off with the book.)

HILLARY

Finally, they threw it in the dumpster and ran away. I tried to climb in and get it out...but I couldn't.

MRS. MILLER

Hillary, I just got a note from the library. It says you've got an overdue book.

HILLARY

I think I lost it, Mom.

MRS. MILLER

That was careless of you. The price of that book is coming out of your allowance.

HILLARY

It was easier to lie than to tell her the truth.

MRS. MILLER

One way or another, you're going to learn responsibility.

HILLARY

To avoid the bullies, I began spending more and more time inside the house.

MRS. MILLER

It's a beautiful day. Why don't you go outside and play?

HILLARY

But staying inside was so much safer. And I had my computer and my video games...

MRS. MILLER

Believe me, I tried to get him to exercise...to make friends...

HILLARY

...my books...and CD's...

MRS. MILLER

You're getting on my nerves...and you're eating me out of house and home...get out!

HILLARY

Staying indoors...and the lack of physical activity...meant that by September, I'd put on a good forty pounds.

MRS. MILLER

You don't fit into anything. I'm going to have to buy you all new clothes for school. You think I'm made of money?

HILLARY

But the new clothes did little to hide my new weight problem.

AMBER

Porky pig.

ROY

Fatso.

AMBER

Tub of lard.

ROY

Fat ass.

HILLARY

Staying home had worked so well in the summer, so why not try it during the school year?

MRS. MILLER

Hurry up, Hillary, you'll be late for school.

HILLARY

I don't feel so good...I have a headache.

MRS. MILLER

Maybe you'd better stay home.

HILLARY

Mom, I have a stomach ache.

MRS. FLEEGLE

Hillary began to miss a great deal of school.

HILLARY

I think I have a fever.

MRS. MILLER

I can't afford to take you to the doctor all the time...not on my salary.

HILLARY

When my mother became too suspicious, I began pretending to go to school. I got pretty good at forging her signature.

MRS. FLEEGLE

Mrs. Miller, we need to talk. Hillary can't afford to keep missing all this school.

HILLARY

To Whom It May Concern. Please excuse Hillary from school today for a.....

MRS. FLEEGLE

Doctor's appointment, dentist appointment, optometrist, urologist, cardiologist, podiatrist, ophthalmologist, chiropractor, dermatologist, orthodontia, proctologist—

HILLARY

That's when I slipped up...

MRS. FLEEGLE

Gynecologist?

MRS. MILLER

So, Hillary, how was school today?

HILLARY

Fine.

MRS. MILLER

How would you know? You weren't there!

HILLARY

The jig was up.

MRS. MILLER

Don't worry, Mrs. Fleegle, Hillary won't be missing any more classes.

HILLARY

And so it was back to school. Just as well though. Home had ceased to be my refuge thanks to... texting.

AMBER

(Texting)

It's was great not having to look at your ugly face at school today.

ROY

(Texting)

I hope you are sick. I hope you die.

AMBER

(Texting)

You make me sick. You make me want to puke.

HILLARY

So I was making my way down the hall, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, when...

(ROY trips HILLARY, who falls—dropping all his books.)

ROY

Watch where you're going, faggot.

AMBER

Yeah, faggot.

(ROY and AMBER laugh.)

HILLARY

And I didn't know what that even meant. So I made the mistake of asking my mother. Mom, what's a faggot?

MRS. MILLER

Where did you hear that word? Did someone call you that? Well, it's not true...it's simply not true.

HILLARY

I still didn't know what faggot meant. But now I had a pretty good idea it wasn't a compliment. So I looked it up in the dictionary.

(He reads.)

"Faggot." "Noun." "A bundle of sticks or twigs used for fuel." I'm a bundle of sticks?

ROY

Fag!

HILLARY

See “fag.” “Fag.” “Verb.” “To make tired by hard work.” “Noun.” “English slang for a cigarette.” This is making no sense at all. “Slang.” “A hostile term for a male homosexual.” What’s a homosexual? Back to Mr. Webster. “Homosexual” “Adjective.” “Having sexual desires for members of the same gender.” What? I’m ten...I don’t even know what sex is. How can I have sexual desires? For any one?

MRS. FLEEGLE

Mrs. Miller called me....quite upset. I tried to explain to her that every child gets picked on and it was just part of the growing up process.

MR. CONCANNON

And the story goes that Clarence Birdseye was traveling in the arctic...

HILLARY

With the onset of puberty, I had a sudden growth spurt. That seemed to make my height more in proportion to my classmates. So they couldn’t call me....

AMBER

Pip squeak.

ROY

Shrimp.

AMBER

Squirt.

ROY

Runt.

HILLARY

Anymore.

MR. CONCANNON

And Birdseye noticed that the Eskimos buried their food in the snow...and pow! Frozen foods are invented.

HILLARY

The extra height evened out the forty extra pounds, so they couldn't call me....

AMBER

Porky pig.

ROY

Fatso.

AMBER

Tub of lard.

ROY

Fat ass.

HILLARY

Ever again. And my grade point average had all but been destroyed with all that missed school. So no more...